7-29-75 NYT

Senators Show Unity In Inquiry on C.I.A.

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 28—The issues are spying, burglary, shootings and even murders—issues guaranteed to be politically inflammatory.

Yet the 11 Senators investigating the nation's intelligence community say they are acting in an orderly, logical way with a minimum of friction.

There has been no table-thumping, no shrill badgering of the House Nn-American Ac of the House un-American Activities Committee and the celebrated Army-McCarthy hearings of the nineteen-fifties.

Missing, too, is the high drama of the Senate Watergate hearings of 1973 and the House impeachment inquiry of a year ago, for the intelligence inquiry is being conducted behind closed doors, with security precautions as tight as those of the agencies under investigation.

The seeming lack of friction so far on the bipartisan Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is all the more remarkable in that its members represent a broad ideological spectrum, ranging all the way from Republican Barry Goldwater of Arizona on the right to Democrat Philip A. Hart of Michigan on the left.

Some 'Minor Discords'

While there have been what some members term "minor discords" and muted grumblings of discontent—primarily over staffing and the direction being taken in the investigation—the fact that there has not yet been open warfare as the committee pursues its politically sensitive inquiry has astounded many observers of the Congressional scene.

The two men most responsible for containing the potentially explosive situation are ideological opposits who have frequently tilted with one another in major Senate floor debates.

Senator Frank Church of Idaho, the Democrat who is chairman of the committee, was one of the Senate's most outspoken critics of American involvement in Vietnam, co-author of the Cooper-Church amendment to restrict United States military activity in Indochina, and a frequent critic of intelligence operations.

Senator John G. Tower of Texas, the Republican who is vice chairman of the committee, is a conservative who through the years has been one of the Senate's chief defenders of the defense and intelligence estabishments.

The two men would seem to have little in common aside from their age (Senator Church is 50, Senator Tower is 49) and the fact that they are both near the top of Senate seniority in their respective parties.

Senator Church is a tall, boyish-faced man who is regarded by many of his Senate colleagues as a "loner" and somewhat self-righteous and pretentious. He won an American Legion oratorical contest at age 16, made his national political debut at age 35 with a keynote address at the 1960 Democratic National Convention and still often speaks like a man all too aware of being on stage.

Senator Tower, on the other hand, is short, dapper and often brusque, a one-time radio announcer, insurance salesman and college professor. A wily politician, he can be cutting in Senate debate but he also has a keen sense of humor on occasion. "My name is Tower—but you can see I don't," he used to tell political audiences as he stretched his five-foot-six frame to reach the microphone.

Despite their past differences—including a difference of opinion on the timing for release of a report on assassinations—the two men have worked together in surprisingly close harmony, each giving in at times to the other in order to preserve a sense of unity within the committee.

For example, the staff of about 100 persons—many of them with first-hand expertise in the Central Intelligence Agency and other intelligence operations and a few who worked on the Watergate and impeachment inquiries — is more hard-nosed than conservatives had wanted but less equipped with investigative know-how than some liberals had urged.

Instead of being the fire-eating radical that some conservatives had feared he would be, Senator Church has been far more cautious and conciliatory toward the C.I.A. than critics had expected.

Senator Tower's performance, too, has surprised his initial critics. Instead of being the obstructionist that some liberals had expected him to be, he has shown a willingness to probe into sensitive areas that he might once have felt were off limits.

There has been muted criticism in some liberal quarters that Senator Church is not pushing the intelligence inquiry as forcefully as he could and that his relationship with Senators Tower and Goldwater has been entirely too cozy.

The New York Times/George Tames

Senators John G. Tower, left, Robert Morgan and Frank Church conferring recently before the start of an executive session of the Senate committee on Intelligence.

Senator Church dismisses this suggestion, saying that he feels it is important to gain the confidence of the White House and agencies involved in the investigation to allay their fears that the committee would be "nothing but a sieve," pouring out state secrets indiscriminately.

There have been suggestions, too, that Senator Church has been a "headline grabber" in the current inquiry, possibly hoping to enhance his prospects for capturing the Democratic Presidential nomination next year.

The Senator readily concedes that he was looking quite seriously into the possibility of a Presidential race earlier this year but that he abandoned such plans after accepting the chairmanship of the intelligence committee.

When the committee completes its work, he says, he might take another look at the Presidential nomination "if it is still open." But he expressed doubt that it would be open by then.

Senator Tower, too, has dismissed suggestions that Senator Church is a "headline grabber" or that his colleague is more interested in seeking the Presidency than in conducting a forceful inquiry of the intelligence community.

Institutional Loyalty

The seeming rapport between the two men can be attributed, at least in part, to the patina of fellowship within the clubby atmosphere of the Senate.

But perhaps a deeper reason for their peaceful accommodation, is the re-emergence of a strong sense of institutional loyalty. After years of domination by the White House, both the Senate and House are struggling to throw off the mantle of executive leadership.

The intelligence inquiry, particularly the assassination issue, is viewed by both Democrats and Republicans on the committee as one means of convincing the nation that the Senate is willing to tackle a job that in their view was

passed over by the Presidentially appointed intelligence commission headed by Vice President Rockefeller.

The assassination issue, Senator Church observed after disclosure of the Rockefeller findings, "has been bucked over to the Senate. Someone has to deal with it. There's no way this kind of issue can be brushed under the rug," he said.

Despite the seeming unity within the committee, however, there are clear signals that the near harmony might well be shattered in the weeks and months ahead as the 11 Senators come to grips with four major issues:

¶How much of the story of the alleged C.I.A. involvement in assassination plots against Cuban Premier Fidel Castro and possibly other foreign leaders should be made public?

¶How soon will the committee release its assassination findings? Senator Church said this week he would recommend issuance of the report in early August. Senator Tower said the report could not be completed before the Senate begins a long recess Aug. 13 an dthat, furthermore, the entire Senate should vote on whether to make public the report.

¶What kind of information should be included in the committee's public hearings, now slated to begin in mid-September?

Should the committee, in its final report, recommend a full or partial prohibition of covert espionage operations or merely creation of some mechanism for tighter legislative scrutiny?

Dispute Over Disclosure

There is sharp disagreement in the committee—although no votes have been taken on the matter—on public disclosure of the assassination findings.

Senator Robert Morgan, a North Carolina Democrat, who was once his state's Attorney General, has expressed reservations about public disclosure of alleged assassination plots, saying that he fears this might tarnish the nation's image abroad and possibly render future C.I.A. operations ineffective.

Another former State Attorney General, Senator Walter F. Mondale, Democrat of Minnesota, feels that as much information as possible should be made public in the report.

"The people have a right to know," he says. "They have a right to know why we will be proposing the remedies that we eventually will propose."

Senator Howard H. Baker Jr., Republican of Tennessee, agrees with Senator Mondale. The only member of the intelligence panel who served on the Watergate committee, Senator Baker feels that the assassination findings should not only be made public in a report but that the information should be aired in public hearings.

Indeed, there does seem to have been some shift in recent weeks away from earlier sentiment of some Democratic liberals for airing the assassination information in public hearings.

Church and Mondale Shift

Senators Church and Mondale, for instance, had once indicated they favored this course. Now, they say they feel the findings should be made in a report instead.

"I would personally oppose open hearings on the assassination issue," Senator Church said recently, adding that public hearings would cause "the maximum injury to the country."

The assassination issue is perhaps the most sensitive area of the broad investigation into all intelligence operations, for there have been reports that the findings may produce political fallout on both parties, perhaps even implicate past Presidents in the assassination plots.

Whether such evidence of Presidential implication has been found or will be found remains cloudy. Senator Church has acknowledged that the committee is examining possible C.I.A. assassination plots, specifically during a six-year period covering parts of the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson Administrations.

Yet, just recently, he said: "I will have no part in pointing a finger of guilt toward any former President — none of whom are alive today, none of whom can speak up—in the absence of clear and convincing evidence linking them."